

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MADRID 09644 241256Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 L-03 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /057 W
-----241258Z 119213 /53

R 231711Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8413
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
USMISSION NATO
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 9644

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SP
SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER VISITS BARCELONA; COMMISSION ANNOUNCES
PLAN FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL AUTONOMY, CO-OFFICIALITY
OF CATALAN LANGUAGE

1. DURING HIS BRIEF VISIT TO BARCELONA (SCHEDULED FOR JUST
BEFORE THE REFERENDUM BUT POSTPONED BECAUSE OF THE ORIOL
KIDNAPPING), PRIME MINISTER ADOLFO SUAREZ PRESIDED OVER
THE CEREMONY PRESENTING THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE COMMISSION
ON A SPECIAL REGIME FOR THE FOUR CATALAN PROVINCES, AND IN
HIS SPEECH DECLARED "THE GOVERNMENT SHARES THE PRINCIPLE
OF THE CO-OFFICIALITY OF SPANISH AND CATALAN IN THE TER-
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RITORY OF CATALUNYA." PLACING THE COMMISSION'S CON-
CLUSIONS IN "THE FRAME-WORK OF THE NEW CONSTITUTIONAL
STAGE WHICH IS BEING ANNOUNCED FOR SPAIN," AND CITING
THE KING'S HIGH REGARD FOR CATALUNYA, SUAREZ SAID
THE CATALAN PEOPLE'S "ASPIRATIONS ARE SEEN BY THE
GOVERNMENT WITH REALISM AND EAGERNESS FOR A SOLUTION."

2. SUAREZ LISTED FOUR POINTS AS BASIC TO THE GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON THE REGIONAL QUESTION: (1) "RECOGNITION OF THE REGIONAL REALITY, WHICH DEMANDS GREATER AUTONOMY IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF ITS OWN INTERESTS AND THE CREATION OF ORGANS SUITED TO THIS PURPOSE;" (2) "RECOGNITION OF THE REGION AS AN AUTONOMOUS ENTITY FOR DECISION AND ADMINISTRATION OF ITS OWN AFFAIRS WITHIN THE FRAME-WORK OF THE INDISSOLUBLE UNITY OF SPAIN;" (3) CREATION OF THE NECESSARY INSTRUMENTS AND LEGAL CONDITIONS FOR THE PEOPLE TO DECIDE ON THE FORM AND METHOD OF REGIONAL ARTICULATION; AND (4) CONVICTION THAT MANY COMMON PROBLEMS REQUIRE REGIONAL RATHER THAN PROVINCIAL TREATMENT.

3. THE COMMISSION, CREATED IN FEBRUARY 1976 AND CHARGED WITH DEVELOPING RECOMMENDATIONS ON A FUTURE SPECIAL REGIME FOR CATALUNYA, CAME UP WITH A PLAN ACCORDING TO WHICH A "COUNCIL GENERAL OF CATALUNYA" WOULD BE CONSTITUTED, FORMED BY THE NEW CORTES MEMBERS (SENATORS AND DEPUTIES) TO BE ELECTED FROM THE FOUR PROVINCES, AND BY THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES. THIS COUNCIL WOULD DRAW UP A STATUTE FOR THE REGION, WHICH IN TURN WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE CORTES FOR APPROVAL. THE COMMISSION NOTED THAT SOME UNIFICATION OF ADMINISTRATION AMONG THE FOUR PROVINCES COULD OCCUR UNDER CURRENT LAW, AND COMMISSION PRESIDENT FEDERICO MAYOR ZARAGOZA SAID THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCLUSION WAS THE URGENT RECOGNITION OF THE CO-OFFICIALITY OF CATALAN.
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4. THE COMMISSION HAD BEEN VIEWED WITH SUSPICION IN CATALAN POLITICAL CIRCLES AND WAS FOR THE MOST PART IGNORED DURING ITS WORK. HOWEVER, ITS PRODUCT, IMPLICITLY ACCEPTED AND EVEN BACKED BY SUARE, INITIALLY APPEARS TO HAVE GONE DOWN WELL ENOUGH IN BARCELONA, ACCORDING TO CONGEN BARCELONA, WHICH REPORTED THAT SUAREZ' SPEECH WAS WELL-RECEIVED AND THAT THE COMMISSION CONCLUSIONS HAD COME AS NO SURPRISE BECAUSE OF SUAREZ' VARIOUS MEETINGS IN MADRID WITH CATALAN LEADERS. ON THE OTHER HAND, SAID THE CONGEN, MANY LEADERS WOULD HAVE PREFERRED THAT SOMETHING MORE CONCRETE BE PASSED THROUGH THE PRESENT CORTES, A PROCESS WHICH THEY SAW AS SUSCEPTIBLE OF MORE CONTROL THAN IF LEFT TO A FUTURE CORTES OF UNKNOWN COMPOSITION AND INCLINATION, IN WHICH EVEN OPPOSITION FIGURES MIGHT, FOR REASONS AFFECTING THEIR NATIONAL CONSTITUENCIES, WISH TO TRIM CATALAN DEMANDS. THE LEADERS RECOGNIZED,

HOWEVER, THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF ARGUING, AT LEAST OUT
LOUD, WITH A PLAN WHICH LEAVES THE MATTER UP TO THE
FREELY ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE. LEFTIST
CATALAN LEADERS, SUCH AS THE RADICAL JOAN RAVENTOS,
LEADER OF A CATALAN SOCIALIST GROUP, WILL OF COURSE
BE MORE OUTSPOKEN IN THEIR CRITICISM OF THE PROPOSED
PLAN. STABLER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, MINISTERIAL VISITS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ElyME
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MADRID09644
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760472-0439
From: MADRID
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761217/aaaaaooos.tel
Line Count: 122
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ElyME
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06 APR 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <06 AUG 2004 by ElyME>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRIME MINISTER VISITS BARCELONA; COMMISSION ANNOUNCES PLAN FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL AUTONOMY, CO-OFFICIALITY OF CATALAN LANGUAGE
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, SP, (SUAREZ, ADOLFO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006